



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – February 19, 2016
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Robert J. Klee and Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen

House Bill No. 5150 Raised – AN ACT CONCERNING TREE WARDENS' NOTICES ON TREES AND SHRUBS PRIOR TO REMOVAL, TREE REMOVAL ALONG STATE HIGHWAYS AND CLEAN-UP BY PUBLIC UTILITY CORPORATIONS FOLLOWING CERTAIN TREE REMOVAL.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding **House Bill No. 5150 Raised – AN ACT CONCERNING TREE WARDENS' NOTICES ON TREES AND SHRUBS PRIOR TO REMOVAL, TREE REMOVAL ALONG STATE HIGHWAYS AND CLEAN-UP BY PUBLIC UTILITY CORPORATIONS FOLLOWING CERTAIN TREE REMOVAL.**

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP has significant concerns with this bill as presented. As written this bill will provide a basis for transparency regarding the tree warden's role in the permitted removal and pruning of trees and shrubs under his or her care and control. It also provides a means for public input into that decision that does not currently exist. However HB5150 does not allow municipalities to determine the threshold for public hearings, but instead imposes a State mandate for public hearings on all tree removals.

Regarding the NEW Section 3 of HB5150, DEEP would be obligated to review and comment on all Department of Transportation tree clearing plans. This section is unnecessary and would create an untenable burden upon DEEP Forestry's limited staff capacity. In lieu of individual tree clearing plan reviews, DEEP prefers to continue working with DOT, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Connecticut Extension, and electric power utilities developing best practices and refining principles of [STORMWISE](#), a roadside forest vegetation management program. STORMWISE seeks to reduce risk of tree-related storm damage to power lines by leaving aesthetically pleasing roadside trees and forest stands. Numerous demonstration sites are currently under development throughout the state. STORMWISE principles take into account "right tree, right place" concepts, tree physiology, and long-term forest management practices to create healthy and resilient roadside tree and forest corridors.

While DEEP certainly appreciates this bill's intent, the bill restricts the municipal option to determine the public hearing process and places an unreasonable expectation on DEEP's capacity to review the Connecticut

Department of Transportation's tree management plans, much of which is mandated by the Federal Department of Transportation.

DEEP would welcome the opportunity to work with Environment Committee on the merits of this proposed legislation and appreciates the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal.

If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov.